the Central Voice

REAL GAY NEWS. WE GIVE IT TO YOU STRAIGHT.

WORLD AIDS DAY

CV captures the moments

PHOTOS ON PG. 14

DOWNTOWN POP

Author Kembrew McLeod

INTERVIEW ON PG. 16

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COVERS ALL INTERSECTIONS

A champion of civil rights from all angles

By The Central Voice

Lancaster attorney Sharon Lopez sat in the court room Oct. 8 when the US Supreme Court heard three LGBT-related civil rights cases. Her analyses in two articles broke down for readers the importance of the cases and the unique elements of each scenario.

Lopez

A regional treasure, *The Central Voice* asked about her history of advocacy and activism.

Central Voice: When did you begin thinking about social justice issues?

Sharon Lopez: I began my interest and work on social justice issues long before law school. At Eastern Mennonite College in Harrisonburg, Va., I was a leader in the Peace and Justice Society. I engaged in civil disobedience related to war and taxes used to fund war. I marched against our military involvement in overthrowing governments in El Salvador and Nicaragua.

CV: And then Lancaster?

SL: After college I returned to Lancaster as a young single mother and volunteered for the nuclear freeze campaign and anti-military efforts in Central America. In the mid-80s I began to see my gay friends getting sick or infected with what was thought a gay disease. We organized as a community in a church basement and started efforts at education and treatment. That was the beginning of the Lancaster AIDS Project.

CV: Which is now part of Alder Health Services?

SL: Lancaster AIDS Project is now subsumed into a regional nonprofit known as Alder Health Services (Which is celebrating its 35th anniversary Sept. 25,

Please see **CHAMPION,** page **21**

At this midtown Harrisburg donation-based eatery, everyone is unconditionally welcome to dine with dignity

EVERYBODY EATS

By Louie Marvin

LGBTQ communities are on the radar of heartshine, a local non-profit

A few minutes after I sat down to talk with Kali Tennis, a worker began fixing something about five feet away from us. He took out a hammer and started banging loudly, and he apologized and suggested we might want to relocate, because he'd be there for a while. Tennis deferred to me to make the choice, explaining through a grin, "I sort of like a little chaos. I couldn't do this project if I didn't."

Tennis is a founding board member of heartshine, a donation-based restaurant at 1122 N. 3rd Street, Harrisburg, set to open in 2020. As executive director Janet Shenk and a growing team of volunteers approach opening day, Tennis talked me through the chaos of the creation process and the "heartshine magic" the team has encountered along the way.

Heartshine is dedicated to "building community through nourishment, creativity, and open-hearted connection." The region's LGBT community is welcome. To start, heartshine will offer a daily "all are welcome, come as you are" donation-based lunch, a monthly community supper, and various community programs. The point is to not only address issues like food insecurity, but to work in coordination with the Harrisburg service network to address other unmet needs. It's an ambitious project, and the volunteer-led team is husting to pull together all the pieces, from preparing the physical space and taking care of non-profit administrative functions, to getting the word out and setting up structures that ensure everyone will be treated with dignity.

The "heartshine magic" turned into a running theme of our conversation. Tennis summarized it as everything falling into place with this project: "we are in dire need of something and most of us are not askers and then it'll fall in our laps." One example she gave was when an unexpected storm threatened an event they were planning called Nuts on a Date (a social outing where everyone was served a date with two Marcona almonds… get it?), and the sky cleared

Please see **EVERYBODY EATS,** page **12**

We give it to you straight.
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From the wacky world of homophobes
HOMOPHOBE OF THE YEAR
There is no single-issue fight

the Central Voice.com

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INTERNATIONAL

MALAYSIA

Caned, jailed for attempting sex

Reuter's reports that five men in Malaysia were sentenced to jail and canings by an Islamic court for attempting to have gay sex, local media and a rights group said. Sodomy and same-sex acts are illegal under Islamic law in Muslim-majority Malaysia, although convictions are rare. The Selangor Shariah High Court sentenced four men to six months' jail, six strokes of the cane, and a 4,800 ringgit ($1,163) fine for "attempting intercourse against the order of nature", the Malay-language daily *Harian Metro* reported.

CAYMAN ISLANDS

Same-sex marriage ruling overturned but ...

The Cayman Islands Court of Appeal has ruled in favor of the government, overturning Chief Justice Anthony Smellie's previous ruling that legalised same-sex marriage in the Cayman Islands.
At the same time, however, the court ordered government to "expeditiously" provide Chantelle Day and her partner, Vickie Bodden Bush, with legal status equivalent to marriage, according to court documents. In a statement following the ruling, attorney and LGBTQ activist Leonardo Raznovich, said, "It is a sad day for Caymanians because their constitution has not been properly upheld by their own courts, and for this reason a sad day for the jurisdiction and its future…." The next step for Bodden Bush and Day is not immediately clear.

HIMALAYA

Lawmakers demand plans, policies

Members of the Himalayan parliamentary Financial Committee and Sustainable Development and Good Governance Committee have stressed the need to formulate plans and policies for sexual minorities in order to ensure their access to dignified life, according to The Himalayan Times.
Speaking at a recent workshop on ensuring LGBTIQ's rights organised by Mitini Nepal with the support of UNDP, six lawmakers of both the committees urged the government to formulate necessary plans and policies. Speaking at the workshop, Krishna Prasad Dahal, chairman of the financial committee, said although the constitution guaranteed equal rights to the people of sexual minorities, they were not able to enjoy these rights. "We need to allocate reservation quota for sexual minorities as well," he added.
The main objective of the workshop was to help achieve Sustainable Development Goals-2030, which envision progress of various 17 human development index as set by the United Nations.

FRANCE

Lawmakers OK in vitro fertilization

France is moving towards allowing lesbians and single women to conceive children with medical help. Such an action will set the stage for a clash with French conservatives who say it would create generations of "fatherless" kids. To loud applause, France's lower house of parliament approved a controversial draft bioethics law in a move that has already sparked outrage from defenders of the traditional family unit, and even opponents in President Emmanuel Macron's own centrist party. For now, only heterosexual couples have the right to use medically-assisted reproduction methods such as in vitro fertilization, commonly known as IVF. Given the green light by the National Assembly, the bill must also get the go-ahead from the upper house, or Senate, before it can become law. The National Assembly passed the draft law by a vote of 55 to 17.

NATIONAL

WASHINGTON STATE, CANADA

Drug-resistant bacteria spreads

Research published in the journal Clinical Infectious Diseases shows a new and potentially disturbing finding: antibiotic resistant bacteria are showing up in stories of gay and bisexual men. Originating in the intestines, the bacteria – called Campylobacter coli – has been showing up in men who have sex with men in both Seattle, Washington, and Montreal, Quebec. Via public health records, researchers located 400,000 reports of similar bacterial clusters from 2015 to 2018. The subjects were not otherwise related, leading researchers to assume it is being passed among gay and bisexual men due to anal sex practices. "The global emergence of multidrug-resistant enteric pathogens in MSM poses an urgent public health challenge that may require new approaches for surveillance and prevention," said researchers in a new release published by Newsroom.

VIRGINIA

1st openly LGBT local elected official

Karl Frisch was sworn in as a member of the Fairfax County School Board . He is the first openly LGBT local elected official in the history of Virginia's largest county where he will serve on a board that has been targeted by anti-LGBTQ+ extremists for decades. Frisch was elected on November 5, defeating anti-LGBTQ activist Andrea "Andi" Bayer by a 62.42% to 37.09% margin, receiving 18,588 of the nearly 30,000 votes cast. He ultimately garnered more votes than any candidate for school board in Providence District since it became an elected body in 1995. The seat was held by a Republican just four years ago. He was endorsed by LGBTQ Victory Fund, FCPS Pride (an affinity group for LGBTQ+ students, parents, and staff within the school district), and LGBT Democrats of Virginia as well as the Washington Post, Fairfax County Democratic Committee, Fairfax Education Association, Fairfax County Federation of Teachers, and a host of other organizations and elected officials.

Who knew? Bleach cures HIV

Former Ronald Reagan advisor, Alan Keyes, is helping to promote a drink called "Miracle Mineral Solutions" (MMS), which claims to be the solution for curing HIV, malaria, hepatitis, common colds, the flu, cancer, and even autism reports David Artavia for HIV Plus magazine. However, according to a report from the Daily Beast, MMS's ingredients, when mixed, create an industrial bleach called chlorine dioxide. Ingesting it can lead to kidney failure, life-threatening hemolysis, as well as nausea and vomiting. In fact, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued a warning for people not to drink the solution after a NBC News investigation discovered over 2,100 cases of chlorine poisoning in the U.S. since 2014.

RHODE ISLAND

Gay Congressman explains impeachment

House Democrats introduced two articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump Dec. 10, 2019. In response, reports Daniel Villarreal for LGBTQ Nation, gay Rep. David Cicilline (D-RI) was the only LGBT member of Congress to tweet about the articles of impeachment by press time, and in just seven words he reminded us of the gravity of this situation. Cicilline, who is a member of the House Judiciary Committee which oversees the impeachment of federal officials, wrote, "A republic, if you can keep it." It's a paraphrased Benjamin Franklin quote that suggests that our nation is only as strong as the citizens and leaders who fight for its healthy functioning. This past September, US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) explained the relevance of the full Franklin quote and the story behind it in announcing the start of the formal impeachment inquiry of Trump. At the time, she said: On the final day of the Constitutional Convention in 1787, when our Constitution was adopted, Americans gathered on the steps of Independence Hall to await the news of the government our founders had crafted. They asked Benjamin Franklin, "What do we have, a republic or a monarchy?" Franklin replied, "A republic, if you can keep it." Our responsibility is to keep it.

Wishing our community was as organic as my vegetables

Publisher's Voice

By Frank Pizzoli

My last column (Nov-Dec 2019) on hope and resilience for the 2020 drew lots of comments. And we're grateful. We're happy whenever anyone in our media saturated culture puts eyes on our words.

It used to be that we put eyes on each other. Not so much anymore. Before all-things-queer evolved into triangulated communications – online everything – I remember the smell of the greasepaint and the roar of the crowd. Influencers were people who one actually wanted to be like. Not a screen image. *Organic*. But that's because you 'talked' to them face-to-face.

So often now I attend functions where one queer is nervously smiling at another queer, often with years between them, and one doesn't know the other has significantly contributed to the quality of our lives. We need to change that for the better.

Michael Hobbes a while back wrote in *The Huffington Post:*

Gay people are now, depending on the study, between 2 and 10 times more likely than straight people to take their own lives.

We're twice as likely to have a major depressive episode. And just like the last epidemic we lived through, the trauma appears to be concentrated among men.

In a survey of gay men who recently arrived in New York City, three-quarters suffered from anxiety or depression, abused drugs or alcohol or were having risky sex—or some combination of the three.

Despite all the talk of our "chosen families," gay men have fewer close friends than straight people or gay women. In a survey of care-providers at HIV clinics, one respondent told researchers: "It's not a question of them not knowing how to save their lives. It's a question of them knowing if their lives are worth saving."

Are lives are worth saving even as organized religion, and now elected officials come out the closet of hate, and opine that it's okay to discriminate.

I know we can create change because I've seen us do incredible things. We've met at the 'intersections' before and not collided. We've built volunteer AIDS Service Organizations in Lancaster, York, and Harrisburg when no one wanted us. Organic, like that last carrot you ate.

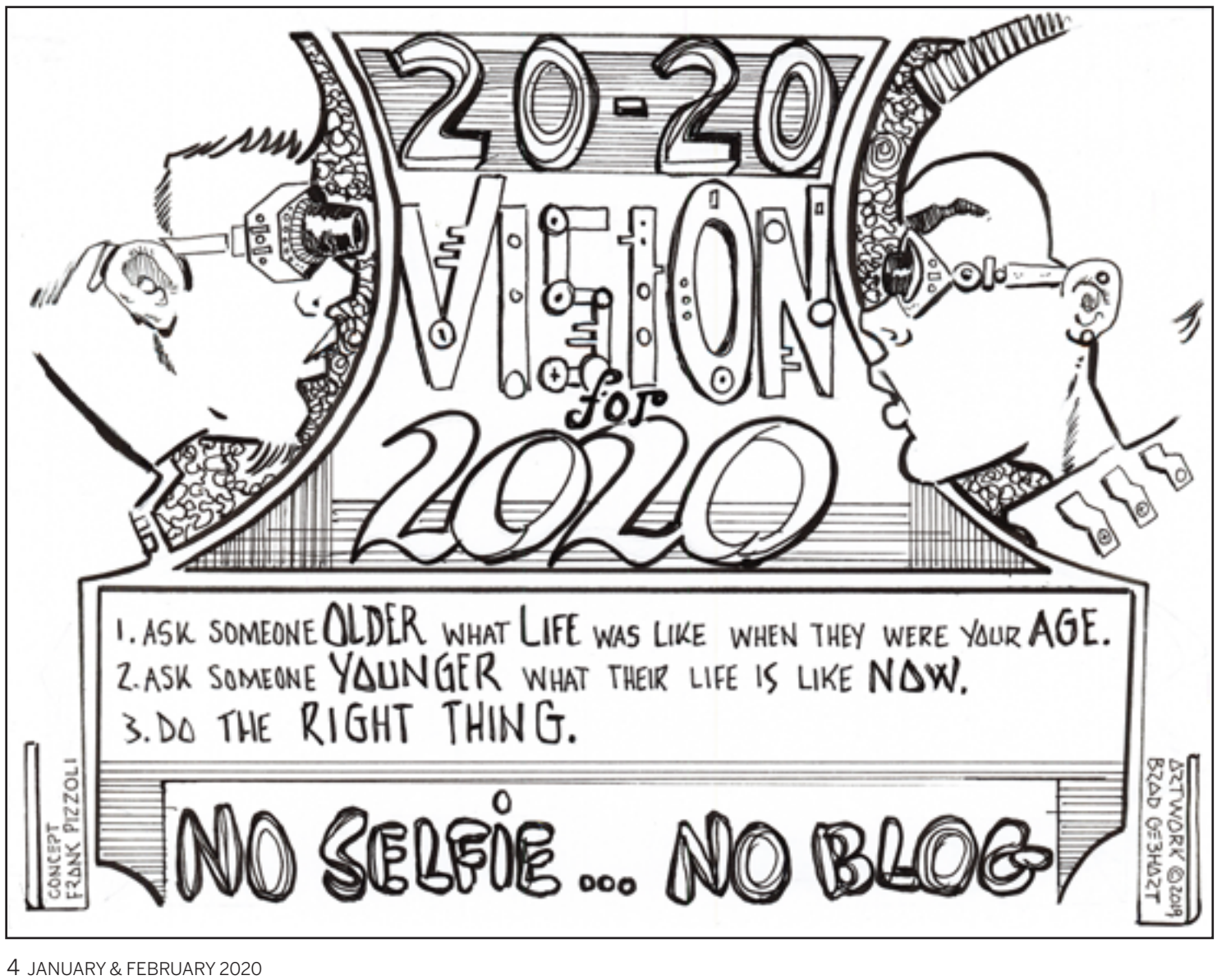
The first week of December 2019 reminded me of the times we gathered face-to-face. There were three World AIDS Day programs that drew about 200 people to them. *Organic*. That's what AIDS was like when the hideous disease first affronted us. There was no way to be a Buddy (one who volunteered to care for someone) without showing up. Literally, you had to be there. Bedside.

Hamilton Health Center was 50 years old last year. They celebrate March 5. See a story on page 5.

Alder Health Services is 35 years old this year. They celebrate Sept. 25.

Our organic face-to-face built community centers, first in Harrisburg, and now they're growing roots in Lancaster and York.

Nothing wrong with adding items to your resume. But there's also nothing wrong with promoting the community too. Over and above yourself. Eventually, there's going to be a 'first openly gay' everything and everybody. Then what? Perhaps doing the right thing will be done because, well, it's the right thing to do. And you have to show up to do it. Can't be emailed or selfied or posted online.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the Central Voice

CENTRAL PA'S LGBT NEWS SOURCE

PUBLISHER & EDITOR
Frank Pizzoli
frankpizzoli@gmail.com

ART DIRECTOR
Louise Sukle

GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Julianna Sukle

CARTOONIST
Brad Gebhart

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Yvonne Carmichael
Louie Marven
Trum Simmons
Terry Drew Karanen
Nicolas Duncan
Tesla Taliaferro
Atticus Ranck
Sharon R. Lopez

SALES MANAGER
Dave Brown 717-944-4628
DaveBrown@pressandjournal.com

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE
Chris Thomas 717-919-1394
ChrisThomas@pressandjournal.com

NATIONAL ADVERTISING:
Rivendell Media
212-242-6863

OWNED BY
PRESS & JOURNAL INC.
20 South Union Street
Middletown, PA 17057
Subscriptions/Distribution 717-944-4628

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THIS ISN'T HARD

LGBTQ Pennsylvanians deserve lawful protections

The Central Voice Editor's note: Besides members of the LGBTQ community wondering when Pennsylvania will join the 21stCentury and, finally, pass basic civil rights protections, our allies also wonder. Read what John L. Micek, online news editor, Pennsylvania Capital-Star, wrote in a recent column.

By John L. Micek
Special to The Central Voice

> "Pennsylvania lawmakers need not wait to see what the high court is going to do. The answer is already before them: Pass the protections. Put Pennsylvania, home of William Penn's holy experiment, in the vanguard where it belongs."
>
> -JOHN L. MICEK, ONLINE NEWS EDITOR, PENNSYLVANIA CAPITAL-STAR

Reading Oct. 8 coverage of oral arguments before the U.S. Supreme Court on whether federal anti-discrimination laws extend to LBGTQ Americans, it was hard to escape the enormity of the moment.

The nine justices — including two Trump administration nominees, Justices Brett M. Kavanaugh and Neil M. Gorsuch — were considering more than an arcane matter of constitutional law. The fundamental equality and dignity of tens of millions of Americans effectively rests in their hands.

According to the *Washington Post,* the majority-conservative high court appeared divided and at odds over whether matters that could cause, in Gorsuch's words, "massive social upheaval" were better decided by the legislative branch, and not the judiciary.

Thanks for bringing that up, Justice Gorsuch.

Because while it could be months before the Supreme Court renders its verdict in the case, there's something that the Pennsylvania General Assembly can do right now — pass a long-delayed, state-level anti-discrimination law for LGBTQ Pennsylvanians.

As the *Capital-Star's* Sarah Anne Hughes reported Tuesday, 21 states and Washington, D.C. (just shy of half of all states) prohibit employment and housing discrimination against people based on their sexual orientation and gender identity. Pennsylvania — which prides itself on its legacy of William Penn's "holy experiment" providing safe refuge for persecuted minorities — does not extend such protections to its own LGBTQ citizens.

A bill, backed by House Democrats, is now before the chamber's State Government Committee. The panel's new chairman, Rep. Garth Everett, R-Lycoming, unlike his homophobic predecessor, has said he's not opposed to considering the legislation.

But not being opposed to the legislation is not the same thing as sending the bill to the full House for a vote, where, if lawmakers follow public opinion, rather than succumb to tunnel vision, it would likely pass.

A 2018 poll by the Public Religion Research Institute, for instance, found that more than seven in 10 Americans supported laws protecting the LGBTQ community against housing, employment, and public accommodation discrimination. That support was consistent across party lines, with nearly six in 10 Republicans in support of an anti-discrimination measure then before the Virginia Legislature.

In a statement released by his office recently, Gov. Tom Wolf called on the Republican-controlled General Assembly to pass an anti-discrimination measure for LGBTQ Pennsylvanians, arguing that "for too long to our collective detriment, we kept some of our best, most talented individuals out of the workforce because of nationality, religion, race or gender."

"When we began protecting the rights of these individuals to work, we all benefitted. Now it's time to ensure our hardworking, talented LGBTQ colleagues have the same rights to be evaluated based on their abilities to perform their jobs," he said.

Legislative Republicans — who have put so much emphasis on cutting taxes and regulation, encouraging the growth of the natural gas industry, and pursuing workforce development measures — have remained remarkably tin-eared on this fundamental civil rights and quality of life issue.

Such large employers as Amazon and Google have not been shy about putting their corporate muscle behind anti-discrimination efforts. And a state's policies can visibly affect whether companies will choose to locate there. So as a matter of dollars and cents alone, Pennsylvania is at a competitive disadvantage.

But more than that, it's just the moral thing to do. Just as someone has no say over what race or ethnic group they are at birth, we now know that biological factors drive sexual orientation and gender identity. So we should not — we must not — tolerate discriminate based on those latter factors.

"Numerous studies have established that sex is not just male or female," Indiana University microbiologist Bill Sullivan wrote in an op-ed the Capital-Star published in September. "Rather, it is a continuum that emerges from a person's genetic makeup. Nonetheless, misconceptions persist that same-sex attraction is a choice that warrants condemnation or conversion, and leads to discrimination and persecution."

Recognizing this evolving understanding, the Wolf administration has announced it will offer gender-neutral licenses to Pennsylvanians who want one. Unsurprisingly, a state lawmaker has stepped up to oppose the measure.

As high as the stakes are in the Supreme Court and in the matter of gender-neutral licenses — and they are undoubtedly determinative — it's also hard not to feel, at least in some small way, that the forces opposed to these measures are fighting a rearguard action.

When I look at my daughter's generation, young people who don't bat an eye when a friend announces that they're gender-queer, or another comes out as bisexual or gay, I am reminded that the moral arc of the universe, despite best efforts by some among us to the contrary, continues to bend toward justice.

We're now four years past the high court's ruling legalizing same-sex marriage. And while it's true that was a different court, with different members, it was encouraging to read that Chief Justice John G. Roberts used the pronoun "they" to refer to a gender-neutral person.

The federal government is already halfway there. As the *Post* reports, the Equality Opportunity Employment Commission ruled in 2015 that gay and transgender individuals were protected under the law.

With that standard in place, Pennsylvania lawmakers need not wait to see what the high court is going to do. The answer is already before them: Pass the protections. Put Pennsylvania, home of William Penn's holy experiment, in the vanguard where it belongs.

The Central Voice and Pennsylvania Capital-Star have a content-sharing partnership.

Voice Box

Notes from our readers

E-mail your comments to frankpizzoli@gmail.com

HOPE & RESILIENCE STILL POPULAR

From editor & publisher Frank Pizzoli:
Response to my Nov-Dec 2019 online and in print Publisher's Note tells me hope, resilience and goodwill remain popular in our 'gotcha doing wrong, you can never be forgiven, shamed forever' culture.

A sampling of responses –

Great piece. Congratulations and thanks for all you do.
- Theo

Thanks Frank. Thought provoking read.
- Clinton

A perfect reflection for the end of the year. Thanks for everything—this year and always. **-Patricia**

Frank, your editor's note includes positive perspectives, insights and approaches that can improve relationships within our diverse communities and broaden the effectiveness of our outreach to build our own groups and welcome others to become our allies. Sometimes a first meaningful step is to inspire oppositional parties to simply live and let us live.

The magnificent empathetic responses to thousands of coming out and it gets better videos and stories continue to reach and win the support of many hearts and minds.

Similarly, while the written words are powerful these perspectives you present could be a great basis for a brief video expressing and explaining how it can get better as lessons for the general public and inside our communities.
- Ed

Summit brings together student leaders and legislators

By Tesla Taliaferro

"Normal people, not lobbyists, influence legislature - real people," state Rep. Patty Kim (Harrisburg, 3rd District) told The Central Voice on Oct. 26 at a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) Youth Mini-Summit held in York County.

The idea for the summit "began about six months ago, the brainchild of the South-Central PA Democratic Caucus' three chiefs of staff," said state Rep. Carol Hill-Evans (York County, 95th District). Besides Hill-Evans and Kim, state Rep. Michael Sturla (Lancaster County, 96th District) is a member of the caucus and co-hosted the event.

Some of the legislators' staff, according to Hill-Evans, "are living it, identifying with it," referring to her chief of staff, James Sawor, MPA. He saw the mini-summit as an "opportunity to help the youth speak up for themselves, empowering them to lead peer-on-peer discussions." Sawor also personally cooked the two meals served to summit attendees.

For the regional legislative caucus, the mini-summit became as extension of the question "What do we want to do to show support?" The caucus is already involved with Pride events like Central PA Pride Festival and York's Equality Fest, and the Lancaster Alliance. So the idea of the summit "fit right in," Hill-Evans said.

All organizers share in the hope that the training provided would become "a seed that [the youth] will sprout across the Commonwealth." Topics ranged from LGBTQ+ Homelessness to Building Safe Spaces through Gaming along with how to handle Bullying as well as Religion and Spirituality as queer individuals.

Students from York Suburban, Cedar Cliff, William Penn, Lincoln Charter, and Penn State York College attended the event. Many lead their local GSA groups, including Rainbow Pulse President Catie Noble of Penn State York. She learned of the summit from the club's advisor, and was not sure what to expect. While enjoying a discussion on Transitioning and Identities Beyond the Q/+, Noble acknowledged that "it's good to be around people going through the same things, to be respected, and to get educated on different topics and interests." She also attended the Healthy Relationships discussion led by Amber Brown, Planned Parenthood Keystone's Director of Training, Community Outreach, and Education.

Audra Lapp and Stephen Queenan, co-advisors to William Penn's GSA, accompanied three students and one parent looking to "become more of a proactive voice and advocate" within the community. Queenan expressed his view that LGBTQ rights today are "where civil rights were in the 1950s and 1960s." Lapp, in agreement, suggested that "there are so many battles left, the main one being winning over hearts and minds." They and their students expressed excitement for this first mini-summit, seeing it as "a great idea and start" and an opportunity to "get involved with other schools." Ultimately, the goal of their GSA is to "pull in a lot of the kids that are out there, to know that there is a safe place for them, and to help them get out there." They welcome students that are "gay, straight, or anywhere in between."

While leading the topic on Moving Legislation Forward, Hill-Evans expressed that she is "anxious to hear stories, because compelling stories lead to changes." In explaining the legislative process to both students and advisors, Kim advised "We [being legislators] are responsible for creating, influencing, and legislating, but we need information from our constituents, from you." That is why Hill-Evans is "always willing to listen to stories."

She noted that as a representative, she needed to know: What is your life like? What are we as legislators not doing that you need? How do we fit into your life, not you into our lives?

Both Kim and Hill-Evans agreed that "to effect change is to be change, and to be consistent. We must, as legislators, continually be in the forefront of legislation, of resources, training, and support - of the real issues that effect our constituents."

EXPANDED BALLOT ACCESS

Here's how voting will be different in Pennsylvania by 2020 primary

The Central Voice Editor's note: Nearly 9 million LGBTQ adults are registered and eligible to vote in the 2020 general election, according to The Williams Institute of the UCLA Law School. Half of registered LGBTQ voters (50%) are Democrats, 15% are Republicans, 22% are Independents, and 13% said they identify with another party or did not know with which party they most identify. LGBTQ voters are racially diverse, nearly half (47%) are under age 35, and one-third have at least a college education.

By Sarah Anne Hughes
Reporter, Pennsylvania Capital-Star

Gov. Tom Wolf has signed a bill that significantly changes how Pennsylvanians will be able to vote by April 2020.

Flanked by advocates and a handful of lawmakers in the Capitol on Thursday, Wolf said the legislation makes the "most significant" changes to the commonwealth's elections code in 80 years. He and other speakers said it will expand ballot access for groups including people with disabilities, the elderly, and those who travel often or have unpredictable work schedules.

Here's what will change:

Now: Only voters who meet certain standards can vote by absentee ballot through the mail.

By April 2020: Any voter will be allowed to use a mail-in ballot. There will also be a permanent list for people who want to vote by mail every election, and ballots can be requested 50 days before an election.

Now: Pennsylvanians must register to vote no later than 30 days before an election.

By April 2020: Pennsylvanians will have up to 15 days before an election to register.

Now: Absentee ballots must be received by 5 p.m. Friday before Election Day.

By April 2020: Absentee and mail-in ballots must be received by 8 p.m. on Election Day.

Now: Voters can check a single box on a ballot to vote for all candidates from a single political party.

By April 2020: Voters will have to select each candidate individually.

"I am proud of this bill because it represents a true bipartisan compromise that advances the rights of every Pennsylvanian," Wolf said.

Some of Wolf's fellow Democrats would disagree with that.

Lawmakers, especially those from Philadelphia, opposed the elimination of straight-ticket voting, saying it would harm voters of color in urban areas.

Jason M. Roberts, a professor of political science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, wrote in the Capital-Star that straight-ticket voting is "higher in urban counties with large minority populations."

"These areas are densely populated and as a result the voting precincts are often heavily trafficked on Election Day," he wrote.

Roberts' research in North Carolina found that eliminating straight-ticket voting increased wait times the most "in urban areas that have large minority populations."

"In North Carolina, my research found that in counties with high levels of straight ticket voting in 2012, approximately 4 out every 100 African-American voters who voted in 2012 were deterred from voting in 2016 due to the elimination of the straight-ticket voting option in North Carolina," he wrote.

Another study done by Austin, Texas-based researchers found eliminating straight-ticket ballots made people less likely to cast down-ballot votes.

"Change is hard," Wolf said in response to a question about the elimination. "When you have new voting machines, you can sometimes have longer lines. I'm not sure what happened in North Carolina. I'm not sure how they can attribute that to the elimination of straight-party voting."

He also noted that Pennsylvania is one of just a handful of states that currently has the option.

"I think we're doing what other states have done. I think it's a change," Wolf continued. "We will make sure that we do everything we can through the Department of State. I'm sure the parties themselves will do everything they can and candidates will do everything they can to make sure this transition is as smooth as possible. And we have between now and the April [2020] election to make sure that we're ready for it and prepare for it.

"But I think [this] will make voting more accessible, rather than going in reverse."

The legislation the governor signed Thursday also provides $90 million for counties to buy new voting machines, as mandated by the Wolf administration, and $4 million for 2020 census outreach.

It has the support of the state American Civil Liberties Union, good-government groups including Common Cause Pennsylvania, and the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania.

"Let's be as clear as we can: All voters in Pennsylvania will have greater access to the ballot because of this new law," Elizabeth Randol, the ACLU-PA's legislative director, said. "In the end, we at the ACLU strongly believe that the ways in which this bill expands access to the ballot outweigh the uncertain outcomes of eliminating the straight ticket option."

Sarah Anne Hughes, of the Pennsylvania Capital-Star, where this story first appeared, wrote this article. The Central Voice and Pennsylvania Capital-Star have a content-sharing partnership.

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Wellness program in full operation

Boasting new, on-site pharmacy services developed through their partnership with Coordinated Care Network, Alder Health Services hosted 60 guests at an Open House Nov. 7. The new service is housed within AHS's Harrisburg Office. "Our partnership with CCN expands our services to existing and future clients," CEO Rosemary Browne, second from left, said. The agency has also recently added a formal Wellness Program, Food Pantry, Clothing Exchange and continues primary health care and other service to the region's transgender community. Celebrating 35 years of continuous operation in 2020, Alder Heath Services, improves the health and well-being of individuals living with HIV/AIDS and members of the LGBTQ community by providing a culturally competent and affirming environment that empowers the people we serve. Contact: 100 N. Cameron St., Suite 201 East, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17101, (717) 233-7190.

| THE CENTRAL VOICE PHOTO

New transgender support group for parents forms

By Frank Pizzoli

Grace Church, 216 State Street, Harrisburg, hosted a support group for parents, siblings, and friends of transgender individuals. The first meeting was held Dec. 9 in the church's Guild Room.

Angela, the parent of a transgender son, tells *The Central Voice* "There is a real need for the group. When my son started his journey, one of the hardest things for me was not having anyone that really understood what I was going through."

Angela had and still has "a wonderful support system, but I always felt like it would be nice to have someone that was going through the same emotions that not only I was experiencing but my son as well to connect with."

She said, "I can't tell you how happy I was when I received the email" on the group forming.

Anthology addresses LGBT health care equality

By The Central Voice

Ever been in a health care setting and felt afraid to be honest? Ever felt invisible? Judged negatively because of who you love?

The new anthology *Bodies and Barriers: Queer Activists on Health*, edited by Adrian Shanker is for you. Shanker is Founder and Executive Director of Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center, Allentown.

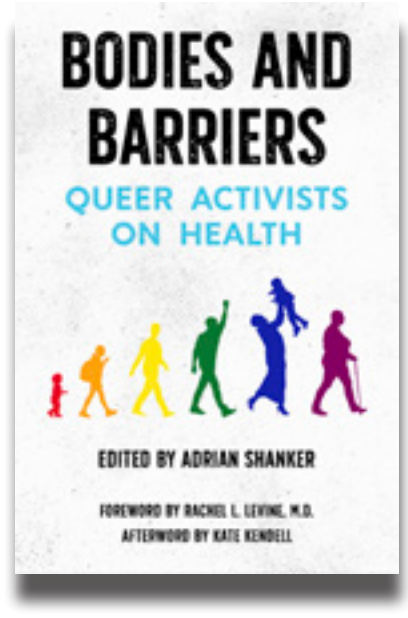
The book features advocates and activists from the central Pennsylvania region, and other areas, and includes a foreword by Dr. Rachel Levine, and chapters by Preston Heidlebridle (York County), and Katharine Dalke (Dauphin County).

Bodies and Barriers is written by LGBT healthcare consumers to inform the healthcare system and make it work more equitably for everyone. The book is structured chronologically to take the reader on a journey through the major stages of life for LGBT people.

Shanker tells *The Central Voice* –

Central Voice: Why is this book important in 2020?

Adrian Shanker: The LGBT movement has achieved significant progress. Yet in 2020 it's still the case that LGBT people experience significant challenges when accessing health care -- and that's assuming we can access healthcare, which isn›t the case for all LGBT people. Bodies and Barriers: Queer Activists on Health presents the real stories from 26 LGBT activists to share the challenges we›ve experienced. One of the first chapters, by Katharine Dalke of Central Pennsylvania, is about informed consent for intersex children. The final chapter, by Justin Tanis, is about bereavement support for the LGBT community. The truth is that the healthcare isn't working for LGBT people. And in 2020, healthcare professionals and policy makers need to listen to our stories and start to provide the care we deserve. Bodies and Barriers is about elevating these issues and moving our country toward patient-centered care.


BODIES AND BARRIERS
QUEER ACTIVISTS ON HEALTH
EDITED BY ADRIAN SHANKER
FOREWORD BY RACHEL L. LEVINE, M.D.
AFTERWORD BY KATE KENDELL

CV: What is your most significant learning having edited a book on LGBT health issues?

AS: Every contributing author in Bodies and Barriers presents information that all of us will learn from whether we are seasoned activists or are just getting to know the LGBT community. The biggest thing I learned from editing this book is that my own challenging experiences with healthcare aren›t so unique --- that in fact, these challenges are quite pervasive. The stories the authors in this book share will remind all of us how important it is to fight for a healthcare system that works for all of us!

CV: Would including LGBT topics in k-12 education help with the issues addressed in the book?

AS: Certainly, we should have an educational system that includes comprensive, LGBT-inclusive sex education. We should have LGBT role-models presented across school curricula. But this issue doesn't end with high school. Most medical schools and other health professional programs provide only one-to-four lecture hours through their entire program dedicated to LGBT health. No wonder that our healthcare professionals know so little about is. When the healthcare challenges LGBT people experience makes it into the curriculum for future health professionals, we will begin to see more health professionals entering clinical spaces with a greater understanding of our bodies and our lives.

CV: Add anything you think is important but CV has not asked. Tell Us a little bit about the authors from Central Pennsylvania!

AS: Three of the authors included in Bodies and Barriers are from Central Pennsylvania. Secretary of Health Rachel Levine (Dauphin) authored the foreword of the book, Katharine Dalke (Dauphin) writes about informed consent for intersex children, and Preston Heldibridle (York) writes about safe binding for transmasculine youth. Additionally, Lancaster-native Atticus Ranck writes about addiction and recovery in the queer community.

CV: When can I buy a copy?

AS: Copies of *Bodies and Barriers: Queer Activists on Health* can be purchased from directly from PM Press (pmpress.org) or from your favorite bookseller!

Hamilton Health Center FQHC
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Drug-resistant bacteria is spreading among gay and bisexual men

The bacteria is usually spread in food, but two outbreaks suggest that it can be transmitted sexually.

Research published in the journal *Clinical Infectious Diseases* shows a new and potentially disturbing finding: antibiotic resistant bacteria are showing up in stories of gay and bisexual men reports Gwendolyn Smith for LGBTQ Nation.

Originating in the intestines, the bacteria – called Campylobacter coli – has been showing up in men who have sex with men in both Seattle, Washington, and Montreal, Quebec. Via public health records, researchers located 400,000 reports of similar bacterial clusters from 2015 to 2018.

The subjects were not otherwise related, leading researchers to assume it is being passed among gay and bisexual men due to anal sex practices.

Campylobacter coli is one of the more common causes of diarrhea-related illnesses in the world. Symptoms of a Campylobacter coli infection include fevers, bloody diarrhea, and severe abdominal pain, and are commonly spread due to contaminated water and drinking raw milk.

The drug-resistance of this cluster of Campylobacter coli is a cause for concern. It seems to have gained its ability to resist antibiotics after the bacteria was infected a virus, after which fragments of DNA end up inserted back into the bacteria's genome. In this instance, the gene for this specific drug resistance was introduced.

This research also indicates the need for more attention on sexual behavior as a possible cause of the spread of Campylobacter coli, expanding from looking at it as primarily a food-borne pathogen.

"The global emergence of multidrug-resistant enteric pathogens in MSM poses an urgent public health challenge that may require new approaches for surveillance and prevention," said researchers in a new release published by Newsroom.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Campylobacter coli infections can affect up to 1.3 million Americans a year.

Campylobacter coli bacteria could be sexually transmitted

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BREAKS LONG SILENCE

Doctor talks about his own HIV journey

By The Central Voice

Faulk

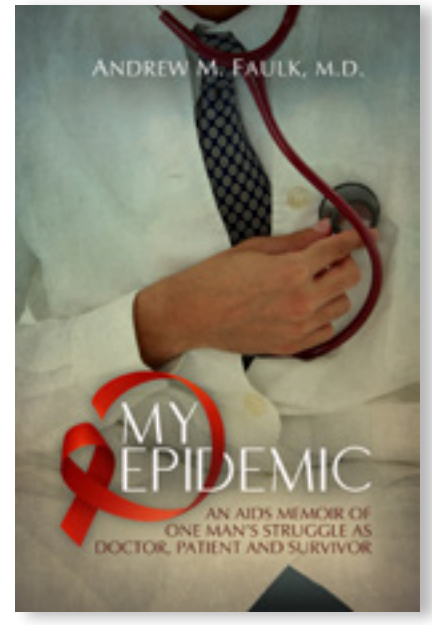
When young Dr. Andrew Faulk first learned he was HIV-positive, he was devastated for it certainly meant imminent death. Until then, he'd been an outstanding young physician with years of intensive training. That day, without warning, he faced the great divide of his life – HIV infection.

Due to the rigors and stress of training, he considered abandoning his medical career. But, instead, he dedicated the remainder of his life to the fight against AIDS, ultimately participating in the care of approximately 50 patients who died, many his own peers, including his partner.

Being HIV-positive, Faulk discovered something other doctors didn't experience—in every patient he cared for, whatever the symptoms, he saw himself. As patients and friends died around him, at any time he, too, could have "stepped off the earth." Yet with intuition, insight and compassion, he brought peace and comfort whenever possible to those he called "my guys." After a long silence he recounts those heroic years and tells this, his true story as doctor, patient and survivor.

A native of Seattle, Faulk saw his first HIV patient while still in medical school. After his training in San Francisco, an epicenter of the AIDS epidemic, he moved to Los Angeles where he participated in the care of approximately 50 patients who died from the disease. He now lives with his husband, Frank Jernigan, in San Francisco where he paints and is active in progressive politics.

Faulk describes his experiences for *The Central Voice* readers.



Central Voice: You wrote your book because?

Andrew Faulk: I wanted to provide a historical record. With time bits and pieces of HIV history are being lost. I also wanted to memorialize some of the remarkable courage and insight of those lost to the disease.

CV: you learned a lot from those around you?

AF: I've learned from direct experience of how physicians, family, friends and partners can deal with those who are dying in order to help the dying live as fully and as serenely as is possible. This will provide assistance to physicians and patients who may face an epidemic in the future. I also wanted to express my personal philosophies concerning how physicians should deal with those dying and those around them who are living. Hopefully, my book will educate others about some of the mistakes I made both in treating patients and caring for myself.

CV: So, history is important? Especially the history of an epidemic?

AF: For years after I left medicine, I mistakenly assumed that if I couldn't give answers that I had nothing to say. Slowly I began to see a truth that many had realized before me: our individual histories were actually rich in solace and hope. I also realized that as time progressed, although mapped so well by other authors, the history of this time of terror and loss was slowly being forgotten by society—both straight and gay. During the worst of the epidemic, I assumed that those days would never, ever be forgotten. I realize that that wasn't necessarily true, so I wrote to memorialize my history as an HIV-physician before it could be lost.

CV: What was your biggest insight into your experience after writing your memoir?

AF: Since the end of my practice, I've learned that the best method of dealing with loss is not the route of solitude and silence I often chose. Occasionally in the book I explain that I lacked the time or energy to properly grieve—that my work demanded tunnel vision in order to be executed with efficiency and empathy. Such methods are and were unhealthy. It would have been better had I sought out supportive individuals or groups in which to process my turmoil and register my losses. But such insight was not in my emotional vocabulary at the time. It is now.

EVERYBODY EATS from page 1

An architect's rendering of the entrance to heartshine, a new donation-based eatery.

with just enough time for the team to finish setting up. During an October event while serving a meal on the Broad Street Market plaza, "heartshine magic" meant having exactly the right amount of food, with the final meal served one minute before the end of the event.

While the passion and enthusiasm for this project opens the team up to noticing these serendipitous moments, they aren't only relying on magic to get the restaurant up and running. One of the first things they did was join a national network of donation-based restaurants, which Tennis said includes almost forty other members, some of which are very similar to heartshine's model and some quite different. Besides access to this network, benefits of membership include participating in an annual gathering of representatives from the member restaurants, and a chance to learn about the best practices from others doing similar work across the country. One of those best practices they learned about was to start with lunch and grow from there, as opposed to starting out too large and having to scale back. Tennis says that heartshine would eventually like to grow enough to be able to serve three meals per day.

In developing heartshine, the team has volunteered or dined at eleven of these restaurants to gather information and participate in this movement. Tennis mentioned that the member restaurants in Fort Worth and Kansas City have aspects that are in line with the model heartshine is developing here in Harrisburg. The one most similar to heartshine's vision is in Fort Worth, which is full-service. Something the Fort Worth restaurant does that heartshine would like to model, Tennis explained, is that everyone is encouraged to volunteer, so as not to stigmatize volunteering as being only for those unable to pay the suggested amount of money. "One of the goals," Tennis explained, "is to create a culture of volunteerism and skill-sharing and egalitarianism, where there's no barrier to sharing a meal. Ultimately that's what we want."

As with many aspects of this network, the process of collecting money at the end of a meal varies. When the diners at the Fort Worth restaurant get their check, it has a blank line that they can fill in with the amount they will pay. Tennis noted that it's very hard to find a point of sale system that can do that, since that technology was not developed with donation-based restaurants in mind. The "sweet spot" in terms of suggested amounts diners might contribute is a big topic of discussion within the network. Tennis described models she's seen that aim to have 80% of diners pay at or above the cost of the meal and 20% of diners paying less or volunteering, and models that are the exact opposite.

Many donation-based restaurants are about food justice, and heartshine is too. They are working with local producers to engage in food recovery and considering sustainability as they develop their processes. This will include recycling and composting, giving people options for portion size, and not offering takeout in order to be as close to zero waste as possible. "If we serve animals," Tennis added, "we're going to use the whole animal," pointing out that executive chef Doug Shenk knows how to do that. Tennis hopes "we've got some adventurous eaters out in Harrisburg."

Tennis says there has been good energy on the ground as the restaurant approaches opening day. "I was expecting a lot of NIMBY and having to defend the idea and that hasn't happened – it's just been love and compassion and 'we need this' and 'yes I am ready to volunteer my time,' and even somebody who has been pretty engaged as a volunteer and giver of ideas and positive vibes tithing to us as an organization" with a monthly donation that she sends with a hand-written note. The heartshine team observes what Tennis describes as Harrisburg's "loving presence for folks who are vulnerable and who maybe don't have the skillset or credentials or access, or not knowing if you send somebody somewhere if there would be compassion at the other end of that desk or phone call."

The vulnerabilities faced by Harrisburg's LGBT communities are on heartshine's radar. Tennis reflected on training she and others participated in that went "beyond diversity training" and led to a deeper understanding of the barriers faced by LGBTQ people and others, sharing that heartshine doesn't want to further marginalize anyone in the way it structures its programs or conducts its outreach. An example of how heartshine is bringing inclusion to its outreach can be found on their website, where you can meet a hypothetical community member, ten-year old Morgan, "to find out how we will build community through nourishment." Morgan's circumstances are described on the website in gender-neutral language.

Tennis is excited for heartshine to open its doors, and knows that it's a race against the clock to put these big visions into practice. "There's a lot of things we have going for us and time isn't one of them," she said. "We're really ambitious."

To learn more about heartshine, including how to volunteer and donate, visit heartshine.org or PO Box 5333 Harrisburg, PA 17110. Contact executive director Janet Shenk at janet@heartshine.org and founding board member Kali Tennis at kali@heartshine.org.

HAMILTON HEALTH CENTER

Celebrating the past, building the future

Hamilton Health Center celebrates its 50th Anniversary with a Gala March 5 at the Hershey Lodge and Convention Center. The event will host business leaders, providers, and all of those who have helped HHC achieve 50 years of positive impact in the region.

HHC CEO Jeannine Peterson said, "During our 50 years of operation, Hamilton has continued to stay true to our mission of providing quality health care to all people, regardless of their ability to pay. Our growth in services and in geographic boundaries, in response to the growing needs of the Greater Harrisburg community, could not have occurred without our community partners, patients, staff and corporate and foundation supporters."

HHC has been providing quality medical care to residents of the greater Harrisburg area and Capital Region since 1969. Fifty years later, a one stop state of the art medical mall Hamilton provides care to more than 30,000 men, women and children. Annually, over 100,000 medical, dental and behavioral health visits are completed. HHC also serves more than 6,500 women and children through the WIC Program.

HHC has an onsite pharmacy (The Medicine Shoppe), Imaging/X-rays and Mammograms via UPMC/Pinnacle and on-site Quest Laboratory. In addition, HHC has an active HIV testing, treatment and counselling program; a Health Resource Center dedicated to the sexual health of our teens; the Center of Excellence program addressing the opioid crisis; the United Way Access to Healthcare (Contact to Care) community care coordinator program; the Triple P Parenting Program, Reach Out to Read early readers program and the Greater Harrisburg Healthy Start and Baby Love programs which assist families in need.

Hamilton has additional locations at Foose and Downey elementary schools and have added sites in Harrisburg (Union Deposit Family Practice), in Millersburg (Hamilton Family Care at Millersburg) and in Newport (Hamilton Health Center of Perry County). Hamilton does not discriminate based on gender, gender identity, race, income, religion, insurance status or ability to pay.

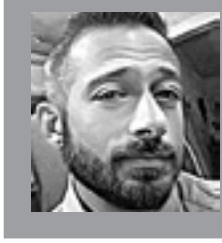
The organization's theme "Celebrating our Past, Building our Future" reflects Hamilton's intent to highlight their successes and to unveil future plans.

As the employer of a diversified workforce which includes more than 240 healthcare and administrative professionals, including doctors, dentists, and nurses, as well as billing, customer service, and support staff, Hamilton makes a significant impact on the economic health of our community.

For more information, contact Brad Gebhart, bgebhart@hamiltonhealthcenter.com or (717) 230-3942, HHC50th.com

Strikeforce 2nd volume enticing

Comic Watch



By Nicolas Duncan

This second issue of Strikeforce is well-paced and entertaining from the first page with a distressing cliffhanger that leaves your heart in your throat! Tini Howard's dexterous storytelling d elivers some suave moments, but keeps the action rather subdued in order for character building. The dialogue is fun and keeps the reader engaged from panel to panel, page to page; like we are living within the story.

The plot of Strikeforce #2: Daimon He llstorm was killed by Blade, but there is no "accident" in the matter. You have to read this issue to know what I mean. Now, the team has been called by Satana to Las Vegas because her brother, Daimon, is acting strangely. What the HELL? We all have heard the statement; "What happens in Las Vegas stays in Las Vegas"… isn't that right, Billy?!

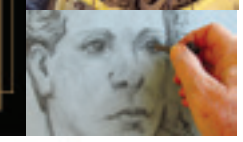
Perhaps it's the place that heightens the character's personalities, or maybe some just needs some time away from their everyday life and let their hair down. Jessica is the entertainer tonight with such heartfelt wisecracks. Mommy needs a night out and Jessica's personality shines in this issue. Jessica Drew, "All right! Dress for the job you want!" I immediately think of Pink's song, "Let's get this party started" LOL. We also get some really good moments for each of the other characters. Blade, well he's our favorite smartass that makes not mistakes. Monica is the thoughtful soul with a professional supportive and proactive style. Bucky shows what kind of an ass-wipe he can be and Wiccan puts the Winter Soldier in his place. The eye catcher of this issue goes to…Angela! The Asgardian powerhouse Princess softened by a demon?

Now, Strikeforce #2 is not all wishywashy mushiness, we do get into some craziness with doppelgangers and magic trying to figure out who's who. Blade takes the lead and places orders for his team. Wiccan concentrates on the mystical elements, while the others look for captives and draw out the Vridai.

The artwork by German Peralta and colors by Jordie Bellaire are brilliant in these pages with such details and cool colors that bring out the light in Spectrum's powers. I would like to see more horrific action with greater mystical psychodynamics by Howard, Peralta and Bellaire, but they still pack a punch at the end of this issue that leaves Wiccan & Hulkling fans' jaws dropped to the floor! You may have to read this issue to understand why the last page is such a huge cliffhanger.

Aah Art Association of HARRISBURG

Upcoming Events



January 10th-February 13th:
Figuratively Speaking Exhibition

February 21st-March 26th:
"Hear Me?" An Exhibition Celebrating Deaf Artists &
"Bootleg Meets R76: A Collaboration"
• Reception February 21st, 5-8 pm

January 13th:
Winter Art Classes for Youth & Adults Begin
• Visit our new website to register online!

April 25th, 6-10 pm:
AAH 2020 Vision Gala
• Harrisburg Country Club
• Music by DJ Jonathan Frazier & KJO's Two-Beat Dames
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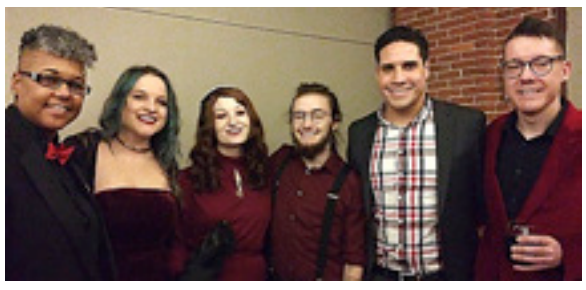
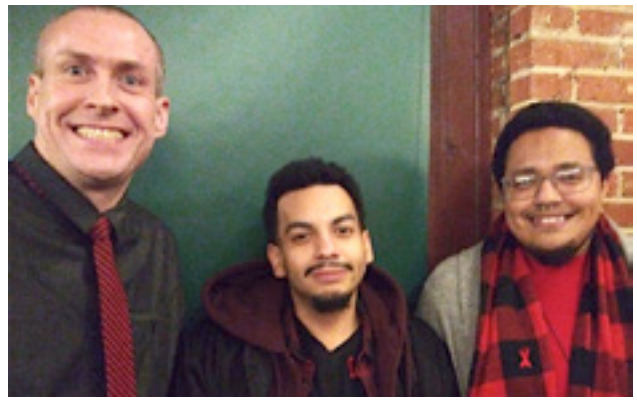




World AIDS Day events held in Hbg.

World AIDS Day events in the Harrisburg region underscored the message: HIV is still here. Get tested.

Throughout the week of December 1, 2019, public programs and a story-circle memorial for longtime AIDS advocate John Folby were held by Hamilton Health Center, Alder Health Services, and the LGBT Center of Central PA.

Collectively, more than 200 people attended programs in which people delivered heartfelt spoken words, danced, remembered those who have died, and professed hope and commitment to ridding the world of HIV infections which annually number 1.7 million people says the Centers for Disease Control.

The Central Voice Editor and Publisher Frank Pizzoli spoke at the Hamilton Health Center program which featured GLO, a newly-opened gathering place and resource center for young gay-bi-trans people of color.

Debut novels, paranormal romance, mystery for winter reading

Looking for cozy reads during the winter months, try one or more of these titles. You'll find debut novels, paranormal romance, mystery, and more. Remember, the Dauphin County Library System has even more titles to enjoy. Find out by either visiting us in person or online at www.dcls.org.

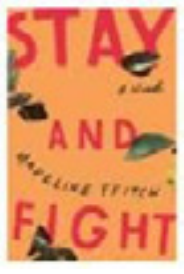
Dauphin County Library Book Reviews

By Yvonne Carmichael

Dodging and Burning: A Mystery, by John Copenhaver

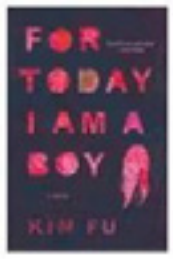
"Fifty-five years after the events that turned their lives upside down, Bunny Prescott writes to her childhood friend Ceola Bliss, asking if she also received a photograph of a murdered woman. In alternating chapters, the two women recount what happened in the summer of 1945 in a small Virginia town. Mourning the loss of her brother who had gone down with his ship in the Pacific, 12-year-old Ceola spends time with his best friend, Jay Greenwood, who shows Ceola a photo of a woman he found dead in the woods. Bunny tags along with them, and the trio discover the body has disappeared. While Ceola wants to play detective, the slightly older Bunny suspects there's something more happening. Family secrets, fears, and hatreds are uncovered, and events escalate until they explode in violence. Copenhaver, who writes a crime fiction column for the Lambda Literary website, makes a powerful debut with this unconventional novel that mixes a coming- of-age tale with a puzzling mystery and a haunting portrait of the experiences of the LGBTQ community in the 1940s." (From Library Journal)

Stay and Fight, by Madeline Ffitch



"Ffitch's remarkable and gripping debut novel traces the journeys of a makeshift family in contemporary Appalachian Ohio. After Helen leaves Seattle with her boyfriend to live off the land and acquires 20 acres and a camper to sleep in, she is soon left by herself when he finds the life he imagined for them too daunting. She quickly adapts to fend for herself, . . .[and] soon, Karen and Lily, a neighboring couple, give birth to a son, Perley, and are no longer welcome at the radical Women's Land Trust, so Helen offers them a new home with her. As the years go by and Perley decides he wants to go to school and be a part of the world the others so despise, the life this family has built threatens to fully unravel. As the stakes rise, for both the family and the preservation of the region, the novel skewers stereotypes and offers only a messy, real depiction of people who fully embody the imperative of the novel's title. This is a stellar novel." (From Publishers Weekly)

For Today I am a Boy, by Kim Fu



"Peter Huang is born to Chinese immigrant parents in small-town Ontario in 1979 as the long-awaited boy in a household of girls. His father, eager to shed all vestiges of Chinese language and culture, speaks his last words in Cantonese after Peter's birth, assigning his newborn son the unofficial moniker Juan Chuan, or "Powerful King." Peter's father holds to strictly traditional ideas about gender and is uncomfortable with his son's reluctance to embrace conventionally masculine pursuits as well as his close association with his sisters. For his part, Peter wants nothing more than to emulate his beautiful, alluring oldest sister, Adele. Emotionally stunted by the disapproval of both his father and society at large and growing up in a home where such things are never discussed, Peter is very slow to realize that his long-repressed dream is attainable." (From Library Journal)

Shadow's Seduction, by Kresley Cole

"Prince Mirceo Daciano and his new friend, Caspion the Tracker, comb the streets of Dacia, drunkenly seeking out pleasures of the flesh. In what should have been a typical night, they coax a bevy of nymphs to bed. To impress their females, the demon and the vampire kiss on a dare. Once they finally break away from their soul-searing kiss, they find themselves alone--and shaken. Had they imagined their explosive chemistry?" (From the publisher)

Juno's Swan, by Tamsen Wolff

"It's the summer before Nina's senior year in high school and she needs to get away. She escapes from her family and small town and enrolls in an acting course in Cape Cod. There, she meets Sarah, a teaching assistant with the theatre program, who captures her heart. Nina knows they are destined to be "coupled and inseparable," as Shakespeare describes the faithful swans of Juno. Bright and independent, Nina has long yearned for a deeper emotional connection with someone, and this seems to be the chance for the love she has always craved. Yet as her own world revolves around Sarah, the heady summer moves urgently onwards. As Nina comes to understand the nature of love and loss, she sees the people in her life anew, and at last, she finds her way home. With lyrical prose and an evocative narrative voice, Tamsen Wolff brings to life the dizzying experience of first love--and its partner, first heartbreak." (From the book's jacket)

Find Me, by Andrè Aciman

"In this spellbinding exploration of the varieties of love, the author of the bestseller "Call Me by Your Name" revisits its complex and beguiling characters decades after their first meeting. No novel in recent memory has spoken more movingly to contemporary readers about the nature of love." (From the publisher)

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DEB HARRY-VELVET UNDERGROUND-WARHOL

NYC Downtown Pop Underground Culture – Precursor to today's maze of queer nostalgia?

By Frank Pizzoli

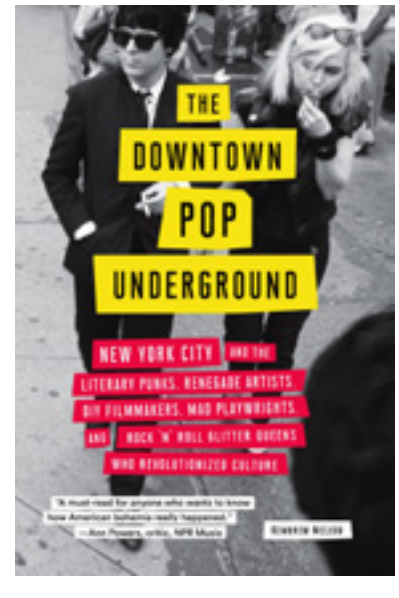
Known as a "media prankster," Kembrew McLeod is an American artist, activist, and professor at the University of Iowa. In 1997, he tried to trademark the phrase "Freedom of Expression," the name of his zine/artist book series. On January 6, 1998, McLeod was granted registration no. 2127381 in Class 16 (for "booklets in the field of creative writing"). Two decades later, he's turned his attention to a glorious period of time in the history of New York City – and the nation – with a delicious backstory book *The Downtown Pop Underground: New York City and the Literary Punks, Renegade Artists, DIY Filmmakers, Mad Playwrights, and Rock 'n' Roll Glitter Queens Who Revolutionized Culture* (Abrams Press, New York). Thick with queer backstory and all the delicious connections (and disconnections), McLeod's book is an entertaining read.

Central Voice: What was your motivation for putting this book together?

Kembrew McLeod: I have always been fascinated by the downtown pop culture scene in New York City, especially the 1950s through the 1980s.

CV: An early love affair?

KM: When I was 16, I'd started working in a record store. By 18, I'd had a chance encounter with Lou Reed. I was at a The Velvet Underground concert in New Jersey and we literally just crossed paths. I asked him a whole lot of questions. And that set the pattern for the rest of my life. That was the seed planted.



CV: And that seed grew wildly?

KM: I did more than 100 interviews for the book. All transcribed, totaling more than 1 million words!

CV: Then came the hard part?

KM: Exactly, I had to figure out how I would tell the story of this fabulous scene that took place years ago. All within one square mile. I've said to myself it was like squeezing an orange to get the essence, the orange being the 1 million words. The finished book is 120,000 words.

CV: What made sense in distilling 100 interviews/1 million words into a narrative?

KM: In order to tell the story, I selected eight individuals - Patti Smith, Andy Warhol, Debbie Harry, legendary Caffe Cino's Joe Cino, the ourtrageous H. M. Koutoukas, bohemian dancer Shirley Clarke, early zine publisher Ed Sanders, the unparelled Hibiscus, and La Mama's DIY theatre impresario Ellen Stewart - whose connections weave back and forth with each other. Today, we'd say their social media networks interconnect. Back then it was all footwork. Plus, it is important for readers to know that each one of the eight people had to have two feet in at least two different scenes – music, poetry, art, drama, performance art, dance, and all kinds of combinations of these genres. I also wanted a good representation of gender. I didn't want all dudes.

CV: And those eight real-life people represent a fun, sometimes hideous, sometimes memorable, at times creative and at times trash period of our nation's cultural history. Did you tell only the good parts, as often happens?

KM: I didn't gloss over anything. Each person selected, and those around them, are on the page in all their glory and with all their warts.

CV: No writer's romance with your 'characters'?

KM: I wanted to be careful not to romanticize drug addiction or transgression for its own sake. I also did not want to be moralistic. I simply wanted to portray the reality of these people, these times. The best way I could do that was to simply tell the stories from their point of view. To show the people that I interviewed, and those around them, as they described themselves.

CV: Like by Sgt. Joe Friday's best-known quote from television's TV series Dragnet:

Please see **DOWNTOWN POP,** page **17**

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DOWNTOWN POP from page 16

Author, artist, activist and professor, Kembrew McLeod

"Just the facts, ma'am."

KM: I really learned how important it is to not be an armchair historian. That's easy. Harder to plumb the depths of nuance along the way.

CV: What was the most surprising thing you learned?

KM: I realized just how important communities are, in general, and the type of artistic, interacting communities these creative people had with each other. It's like a twist on Jane Jacobs POV (Jacob's The Death and Life of Great American Cities, 1961, focused on primarily Greenwich Village, is a critique of 1950s urban planning policy she thought responsible for the decline of many U.S. city neighborhoods.)

CV: One person affects the next one?

KM: Right. It's not great men or women who create change, in general or artistic change. It's more of a domino effect that starts at street level. Where they find each other.

CV: The sum total of their interactions added nuance to their unique artistic genres?

KM: One transforms the other. Then as it gets picked up into mainstream, I mean, think about it. In single and mixed artistic settings, these people were performing on stage, way back then, their conceptions of sex, sexuality, sexual orientation, and gender expression.

CV: Foreshadowing today's explosion of expressions and interest in human gender norms?

KM: Yes, they were 'gender performing' and 'gender bending' ions before academics grabbed hold of it all and created Queer Theory. They planted – performed - the seeds of so much of what see now.

CV: What helped those seeds grow?

KM: They were, in a pre-Internet world, a few subway stops, maybe 40 blocks away from the then-world's media capital and culture industry, uptown Manhattan – Broadway, Off-Broadway, television networks, especially CBS which dominated back then. The culture giants pumped it out. The nation consumed it.

CV: Legitimizing the changing artistic expressions?

KM: Exactly, in 1965 The Velvet Underground appeared on the CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite (often cited as "the most trusted man in America" after being so named in an opinion poll). Their kind and their kind of music began trickling into modern culture.

CV: And then talk shows picked up on the phenomena?

KM: Talk shows began having what we might call the weirdos on television.

CV: Same as later when Michael Alig, 90s co-creator of the Club Kids phenomena, began popping up on TV talk shows? And 20 kids ran away from home that night?

KM: (Laughing) Yes! The impulse is still with us. It just disseminates quicker. For better or worse.

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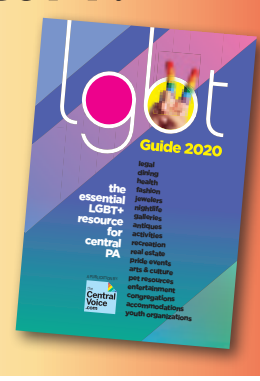

Merriam-Webster names 2019 word of the year

Merriam-Webster announced it has chosen "they" as the 2019 word of the year. The singular "they" is a pronoun used to refer to a person whose gender identity is nonbinary, a word that itself was added to the Merriam-Webster.com dictionary in September of this year. The gender-neutral pronoun is used in place of "he or she". And in September of this year, Grammy-award winning singer-songwriter Sam Smith announced their decision to use gender neutral pronouns. Smith is far from alone. Around the same time, Merriam-Webster added gender-neutral pronouns "they" and "themself" to the dictionary. While "they" may be increasingly common in modern language as English speakers strive for more inclusive words, its use as a singular pronoun is not new. As Merriam-Webster writes, "English famously lacks a gender-neutral singular pronoun to correspond neatly with singular pronouns like everyone or someone, and as a consequence they has been used for this purpose for over 600 years." Despite the word's long history, searches for "they" increased by 313% in 2019 compared to the previous year, according to Merriam-Webster. While the dictionary didn't officially select a runner-up for word of the year, it did note that searches for the phrase "quid pro quo" spiked 644% from last year. The Latin phrase, literally translated as "something for something", is defined by the dictionary as "something given or received for something else" and as "a deal arranging a quid pro quo." The phrase has come up repeatedly in the impeachment hearing of Donald Trump.

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CONSERVATIVE FEDERALIST SOCIETY MEMBER

Openly-gay Patrick Bumatay appointed federal judge

A San Diego federal prosecutor was confirmed by the Senate to a seat on the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

In a 53-40 vote, openly-gay Patrick Bumatay became the 49th circuit appointee to be confirmed under the Trump administration, part of a steady drive by Republicans to remake the federal bench with conservative jurists reports Kristina Davis for the *San Diego Union Tribune*.

It is an especially sweet victory for the administration given the 9th Circuit's liberal lean, which has made it a prime spot for the president's foes to challenge his policies. President Donald Trump has often complained about being treated unfairly by the nation's largest appellate court, calling it a "big thorn in our side" and "out of control."

The confirmation comes despite a lack of support from Bumatay's home state senators, Democrats Dianne Feinstein and Kamala Harris.

Much of the criticism has centered on Bumatay's lack of experience in appellate matters. In a written questionnaire, he acknowledged arguing twice in the 9th Circuit and filing about a dozen motions or legal briefings in appellate court. Bumatay, 41, also clerked for an appellate judge in the 10th Circuit.

The criticism became more political just before the Senate Judiciary Committee's confirmation vote three weeks ago. Feinstein, the committee's ranking chair, said she was dismayed to learn through Bumatay's written answers that he had worked on Trump administration policies that separated migrant families at the border.

The Trump administration's choice of Patrick Bumatay has been controversial, mostly due to criticism of his lack of experience.

Bumatay wrote that during a detail to Washington as counselor to the attorney general from February 2018 to March 2019, he was focused on "combating the opioid crisis, strengthening efforts against transnational organized crime, and prison reform and inmate reentry initiatives," as well as oversight of several federal law enforcement agencies.

Because of his experience with criminal immigration enforcement as a prosecutor in San Diego, he said he was called upon to consult on an April 2018 memorandum to federal prosecutors outlining a zero-tolerance policy for misdemeanor illegal entry cases along the southwest border.

The policy was hastily rolled out soon after, without the ability for various law enforcement and child welfare agencies to track separated parents and children, nor the ability to reunite them when the adults' criminal cases were closed. The policy was later called back by Trump after public backlash over the separations. A San Diego federal judge then ordered the government to facilitate the reunification of thousands of families.

Bumatay is the son of Filipino immigrants, who came to the U.S. in the 1970s and established themselves as physicians.

Bumatay is openly-gay, and during testimony to the Senate Judicial Committee he introduced his husband, with whom he is raising twin daughters.

He is Ivy League educated, graduating from Yale University and Harvard Law School.

He has worked in the U.S. Attorney's Office in San Diego since 2012, mostly prosecuting cross-border drug- and human-smuggling cases.

During special details to Washington, he also helped support the nominations of Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh to the U.S. Supreme Court.

He is a member of the conservative Federalist Society, which promotes an originalist approach to the Constitution, meaning that it should be read as the founding fathers meant it at the time it was ratified.

In March 2017 a colleague at the U.S. Attorney's Office asked Bumatay if he was interested in being considered for a judicial vacancy in San Diego, and Bumatay passed along his resume with the understanding it would be going to the White House, according to Bumatay's written answers. A few months later, a Justice Department colleague asked if he was interested in a seat on the 9th Circuit, and Bumatay said yes. He was interviewed by the White House a week later.

Bumatay is replacing Judge Carlos Bea, who will step away from full-time duties and go on senior status. While the court is based in San Francisco, Bumatay is expected to maintain chambers in San Diego, the 9th Circuit said Tuesday.

Another 9th Circuit nominee, Lawrence VanDyke, is expected to be voted on by the Senate on Wednesday. The former Nevada solicitor general was given a rare "not qualified" rating by the American Bar Association.

WHERE DO YOU STAND?

Poll: More than half of PA voters support impeachment inquiry

The Central Voice Editor's note: If 57% of the registered voters in a Franklin & Marshall College poll support the impeachment inquiry passed in December, 2019 by the US House of Representatives, well, someone in that sample had to be from the LGBT community of voters.

By John L. Micek
Editor-in-Chief, Pennsylvania Capital-Star,
Special to The Central Voice

With the U.S. House set to vote this Thursday on a Democrat-authored resolution laying out the next steps in an ongoing impeachment inquiry of President Donald Trump, voters in a key 2020 battleground state say they support that investigation.

Fifty-seven percent of registered voters in a new Franklin & Marshall College poll say they support the inquiry, which the White House and its allies on Capitol Hill have tried to dismiss as a "sham," according to CBS News. Trump has frequently referred to the ongoing investigation, spurred by a controversial phone call with the president of Ukraine, as a "witch hunt."

Among those who support an inquiry, 36 percent said the main reason they did was because they believe Trump broke the law or acted with corrupt intent. Among opponents, more than a quarter (28 percent) said Trump was the victim of partisan politics or the target of a witch hunt, the poll found.

Pennsylvania Republicans responding to the poll are onside with the White House. Barely two in 10 Republicans (21 percent) support an inquiry, while just 18 percent of self-identified conservatives support it. Eighty-five percent of all Democrats and 97 percent of self-identified liberals support the probe.

More problematic for the White House is the strong support among independents (61 percent) and self-identified moderates (67 percent). Many of those voters crossed over to Trump in 2016, helping him become the first Republican in three decades to carry the Keystone State.

Irrespective of how they feel about an inquiry, 71 percent of respondents said it's inappropriate for a sitting president to ask a foreign leader for dirt on a political opponent, the poll found.

That support for the inquiry is reflective of deeper issues for Trump, who's been a frequent visitor to Pennsylvania over the last few weeks. Just a third of respondents (35 percent) said he's doing a "good" or "excellent" job as he gets ready to close out the third year of his administration.

Thirty-seven percent of respondents said Trump has done a good enough job to deserve re-election, while nearly six in 10 (59 percent) say it's time for a change — though that figure likely can, and will, change when a Democratic nominee emerges.

Reflecting the national topography, Trump loyalists remain firmly in the White House's camp, with 74 percent saying they plan to vote for the president no matter who runs against him. The same holds true for Trump's opponents, with 85 percent saying they plan to vote against him.

The survey of 482 registered voters was conducted from Oct. 21 to Oct 27. The sample includes 226 Democrats, 188 Republicans, and 68 independents, for a total margin of error of 6.1 percent.

John L. Micek is Editor-in-Chief of the Pennsylvania Capital-Star, where this story first appeared. The Central Voice and PCS enjoy a content-sharing partnership.

| CAPITAL-STAR FILE PHOTO

Bonding as brothers

What does it mean to be a man in the 21st century? For starters it means to be ourselves.

Making Sense of Life

By Dr. Terry Drew Karanen

Do you think this issue's column is just for the guys? Wrong! Read on ladies (and gentlemen, too!)

What does it mean to be a man in the 21st century? Guys all over the world and in all spectrums of male sexuality are asking themselves that question. Ultimately, the answer lies within each of us. There are at least as many forms of behavior for men as there are cultures. Even the term LGBTQAI+ "community" can be questioned – sometimes we don't much act like a community. Instead we drop very quickly into our "L," "G," "B," "T," "Q," "A," "I," and "+" communities to find the acceptance we seek.

One of the biggest stumbling blocks for gay men is the fear we are going to be too much like our straight brothers, or in other cases, not enough like them! We don't want to be seen as sloppy who can't keep a clean house and only watch sports. But at the same time, we may be seeking to emulate other characteristics, such as pursuing a hyper-masculine body image.

The stereotypes we apply to "being men" are often ridiculous, just like the example in the preceding paragraph. Not all gay men are fashionistas, nor do all of us hate sports. My late husband couldn't match a tie to a shirt and suit to save himself. And, though I can with expert success, you're more likely to find me in jeans and a t-shirt than sipping champagne in a tux at a fancy function (though I'm told I do clean up well!).

The younger gay, bi, non-binary, queer, and trans men can be amazing examples to those of us in our middle or senior ages. Many of our younger counterparts are relentless and brazen in embracing their individuality through their appearance, choice of partners, and lifestyles. Most people want to be accepted regardless of their sexual orientation or preference, but we must also accept ourselves. In fact, if we don't accept ourselves neither will anyone else.

To be a man in our times is nothing like it was in the 1950s, when gender roles were stereotyped in a way that left little if any room for men who love men. Sadly though, that decade is often referred to as "the good old days," when everyone knew their place and life was good. The trouble is, that wasn't the case. LGBTQAI+ people didn't have a place and life for us pretty much sucked.

Being a man today requires us to own up to our desires, to acknowledge our masculine AND feminine energies, and to being willing to reach out for support. We don't have to, nor should we be expected to, "go it alone," or "man up."

For the women still reading, please know that you play a huge role in the developing masculinity we're seeing in our communities. Men can learn from you, and vice versa, of course. But we have to come together to learn from one another, have the difficult conversations, tell our stories, and open our hearts and arms to accepting one another.

As we begin the new year, we might want to recommit to:

Owning our personal power through expressing our desires

Accepting and even seeking out more diversity in our lives to broaden our awareness

Being kinder and less judgmental about how we talk, look, walk, or dress

Endeavoring to look more for the positive and good in ourselves and others

What does it mean to be a man in the 21st century? For starters it means to be ourselves. If you identify as a man who loves men, you have opened the door to far more than most of our fathers or grandfathers could have imagined. It can mean that you are willing to let down your guard, feel the camaraderie of your brothers, and are more able to explore your desires in all areas of life.

Or not. Being a man who loves men can also mean that you might still be carrying the guilt of those desires thrust upon you by perceptions of heteronormality, societal expectations, and religious teachings that use scripture as weapons.

We all have the capacity to change our thinking and change our lives. No one has to stay stuck in a life that isn't working for them. It's up to us to help one another make sense of life, and that comes through deciding individually exactly what we want our lives to be.

Terry is licensed social worker in private practice in Carlisle, a speaker, and award-winning author - find his books on Amazon. His new men's group, Bonding as Brothers, begins meeting in the spring. Contact him at: terry@terrydrewkaranen.com

CHAMPION from page 1

CV: Historically, you've also worked with the Lancaster Rape Aid Project?

SL: That is now a new entity as well. Women's issues were my focus during the next few years and I even had a brief stint on the Lancaster Commission for Women, which was disbanded after the Lancaster County Commissioners voted to disband us because we would not withdraw our membership from the National Association of Commissions for Women. They wanted us to withdraw because the NACW had a public policy position in support of choice and a woman's right to chose to continue or end her pregnancy.

CV: And your work also includes racial justice issues?

SL: With the Lancaster YWCA. We did a community conversation on racism and held focus groups across Lancaster County to secure feedback from residents on how to best fight racism. Some of the recommendations were implemented and continue to this day. The YWCA truly is a home for women of all colors and races.

CV: Your work has been at all levels?

SL: Choosing to become a lawyer was part of my social justice journey. I went to law school so I could work to change polices and promote procedures that kept the marginalized from succeeding. I quickly discovered that policy development on the larger scale, such as the state legislative initiatives, involved more compromise than I wanted to engage in. I turned to individual advocacy for the poor and began my career in Legal Services as what is known as MidPenn Legal Services. There I represented poor people in emergency situations, in protection from abuse situations, custody snatches, unemployment compensation hearings, and public benefits cases.

CV: And one thing lead to another?

SL: I loved working with my individual clients but longed to see broader impact on the vulnerable community I served. I started my work at the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence as their Pennsylvania Senior Attorney. This allowed me to develop policies and procedures that kept the most vulnerable women in mind so that they experienced the lowest amount of adverse impact. We were not always successful at this, but it was always on my mind.

CV: Then you formed your own law firm?

SL: Yes. We are committed to social justice issues and look for ways to promote that conversation often in our attorney circles.

CV: Social justice issues, like civil rights for LGBT individuals, are important to you because?

SL: Social justice issues are important to me because social justice advances the values of the democratic process, liberty, equality, and justice. Having the opportunity and support for a voice and participation in our democratic process is essential if we are to survive as a country and a democracy.

CV: And our democratic values requires us to act?

SL: This value requires us to look for the obstacles to engagement and to remove them. Liberty is the value of freedom of the individual, to live the life you were born to live and want to live. Equality is making sure that we treat people with value and humanity and equal opportunity, irrespective of that person's physical or sexual immutable characteristics. Finally, the value of justice requires us to make the victim of injustice whole and to prevent the harm that injustice and do before it occurs.

CV: And these values are for everyone?

SL: These values are incredibly important to every marginalized person, gay, straight, bi-sexual, black, white, Latinx, Asian, male, female, or non-binary. The less power each has, just because the person is who they are and cannot change, the more important it is to promotes the values of social justice.

CV: Dare to forecast how you think the US Supreme Court might rule on the three cases now under its review?

SL: My hope is that Chief Justice Roberts will act to protect the institution of the Supreme Court and the law and find that the definitions of sex includes a subset of LGBT individuals. It is clear that fear of others who are non-conforming is still very much a motivator for hate and discrimination. We need the laws and the jurists who interpret them to expand the value of liberty, and equality so that we can continue in the right direction as a democratic society.

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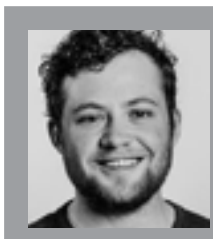
Dating, disclosing, and love



By Atticus Ranck

Finding love is a big concern for trans people, and it's not without its validation. A trans guy told me that when he came out to his mom, his mom said, "Who's going to love you?" I've heard from parents of trans kids that of all the concerns they have regarding their children's future, dating and love is one of their biggest fears for their children. Who will love them? Will they be safe? What happens if they're fetishized for their identity? Will they be loved despite being trans? And trans people ask themselves all these same questions.

These concerns and questions are valid. When trans people date, they are often tasked with deciding when and where to disclose their identity. Some trans people may feel like their being fetishized for their identity. They may ask themselves, Am I only "dateable" because I appear trans? Will that person want to be seen with me in public as a couple? Will this person still like me when/if I appear cisgender?

These questions are not just rhetorical. The moment a trans person chooses to disclose their identity is the moment when violence is most likely to occur. I can't talk about love without talking about the homicide rate of trans people, particularly trans women of color. Some of these murders are the direct result of transphobia at the hands of acquaintances or partners. Many of the killings are the result of the intersection of homophobia, racism, sexism, and transphobia. Some of the killings are because circumstances force trans people into less than ideal situations – poverty, homelessness, food insecurity, economic insecurity, survival sex work and other underground economy work. Meeting new people, dating, putting yourself out there - it's frightening, and a concern for trans people and the people who love us.

I am one of the lucky ones. When I first met my wife in August 2016, I was scared and I pushed her away. Even though I was really attracted to her physically and emotionally, I didn't know if I wanted to be with a trans woman. I felt like if I was with a cisgender woman, it helped to solidify my identity as a heterosexual, cis-passing male; it affirmed my identity. If I was to be with a trans woman, did that mean that only trans people deserved other trans people? Was I not "male enough" to be with a cisgender woman? Plus, I was struggling with some internalized homophobia. What would people think? What did I think?

Ultimately, I moved out of the state and I didn't know if we would continue to see each other. Luckily, she didn't let me go that easily. She said she saw something in me and knew I was a good person. She pursued me and I cannot be more grateful that she did. I came to realize that she is what I want and fuck it to my own internalized homophobia and my own demons and whatever society says I should do or be.

Now we have a love that is more than I ever thought I deserved. She teaches me every day to let go of my to-do lists and just live, she teaches me that I'm enough and I'm worthy and I'm deserving of all the good things in my life. Conversely, she's told me that I've helped her be more open and forgiving and warm.

Worrying about when and where to disclose is a real and valid concern. Safety when dating should be taken seriously. Take proper precautions but don't let it stop you from realizing that you are worthy of love, you are deserving of being with someone who validates you and makes you feel beautiful.

PennDOT hoping to allow "X" gender designation on driver's license

With a target date of mid-2020, PennDOT is gearing up allow licensed motorists not to disclose their genders on their driver's licenses. Motorists will be able to select "X' on the gender section of a license application.

Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf told the Associated Press he supports the change. "I believe that we ought to recognize and be supportive of folks who are looking to figure out what their gender identity is," Wolf said.

The proposed change is not the first one regarding gender identification on a driver's license. In 2010, PennDOT allowed changes in gender markers so that transgender residents could correctly identify their gender on a license.

I was warned...but I went anyway

The Blake Late Show

By Ron Blake

The health and well-being of our LGBTQ community depends on us all telling our stories.

It is important the new generation understands the past. It is important the mature generation never forgets. And it's very important to share our stories of where we are today. The bad…and the good.

Last month I visited the University of Wyoming for the first time. I came with my big awareness project about sexual and domestic violence that I've taken on a cross country odyssey over the past four years.

I was cautioned by supporters and advocates around the nation to be careful on my journey for several reasons. I was traveling alone. I am gay. And I was coming to Laramie, Wyoming.

People reminded me of the Matthew Shepard story of tragedy and hate from 21 years ago in this city. I was further reminded that this is a conservative state.

Matthew was the college student who was taken away from a bar by two men to a rural area outside of Laramie. He was then tied to a fence post, beaten, and killed. All because he was gay.

On my journey to reach a symbolic goal I've given a TEDx talk and have spoken out in dozens of colleges and cities about my story of sexual and domestic violence so that I can find recovery while helping others find their healing too.

Part of that story involves me speaking out as a survivor who is not just a man… but a gay man.

But I did not let this history of hatred for gays stop me from coming to Laramie and the University of Wyoming. We can't live our lives in fear or stay stuck in the past. Or we will never be able to live at all. So I went there anyway.

Sure I realize there are people who do not accept me or like me because I am gay. However, I didn't experience hatred during my one day and overnight while in Laramie.

The students at UW and the residents of the city listened to my story of trauma into triumph. They offered their support for my efforts to get my project to the symbolic goal so I can help millions of survivors find esperanza in a unique way.

Stigmas take a long time to erase. The stigma about male survivors of sexual and domestic violence. The stigma about gay men. And the stigma about Laramie and the hate crime murder of UW student Matthew Shepard.

I appreciate that residents and students were warm and inviting to me on my recent visit to Laramie and the University of Wyoming. They treated me as more than a survivor. As more than a gay man. They all treated me as their brother. That is the story I will share with the world.

This article is brought to you by the letters LGBTQ. That Sesame Street guy who proudly authored this story is Ron Blake and you can let him know everything's A-OK (or not) at rblake5551@hotmail.com.

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Struggling with inclusiveness

LGBT Center of Central PA

By Miller Hoffman

As an LGBTQ movement in southcentral Pennsylvania, our struggle with inclusiveness is to some extent about how we understand justice and injustice in ways that incorporate the experiences of many distinct and overlapping people. We don't always include trans identity and experience in meaningful ways. We don't always include non-binary folks – genderqueer, agender, neutrois, genderfluid, genderflux, two-spirit, polygender, pangender folks – or to even know these folks exist and how they express themselves. We don't always recognize how narrow representations of trans people are on tv and in film, how they tend to skew toward binary, white, middle- and upper-class models and toward a standard that is conventionally attractive, able to "pass," respectable, and thin. We often fail to challenge the framework in which trans people of color are measured by a standard of gender based on white norms and ideals and are therefore forced into a deficit from the outset. And so on.

We lengthen our acronym in our hope to exhaust the ever-expanding universe of people and peoples in the LGGBTQQIAAAPP communities (lesbian, gay, genderqueer, bi, trans, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, agender, ally, pansexual, polyamorous), which still already leaves out the NGGTPP folks named above, and a few dozen of the Facebook gender and relationship options, and the many, many folks who are creating new names for and understandings of themselves, and so on. We can't necessarily create an exhaustive list of initials that will bring everyone in and leave no one out. And why do we try, I wonder sometimes, when we still struggle so much with basic inclusions of just the T in our branding and messaging and accommodations.

In our desire to find ourselves in stories of protest and rebellion, we co-opt and center ourselves in the story of Miss Major Griffin-Gracy, Stormé DeLarverie, Tammy Novak, and the veterans of Stonewall: drag queens, early trans women and men, crossdressers, effeminate gay men, stone butches, scare queens, and other gender suspects, many of whom were people of color. And the stories of triumph that we cannot easily appropriate – the Cooper Do-nuts, the Compton Cafeteria riots – we do not tell.

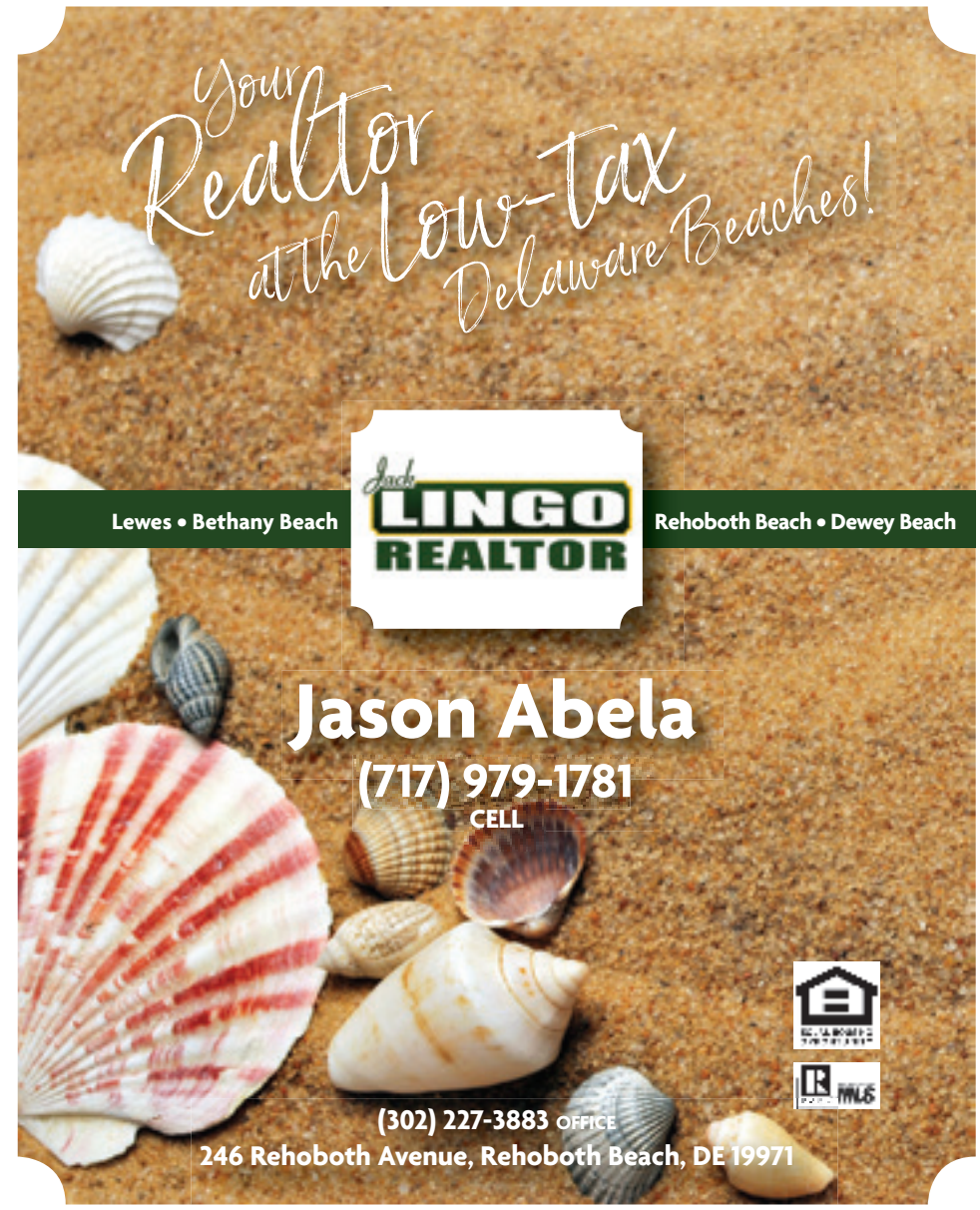
And I wonder whether it might transform our movement and how we approach inclusion, how we understand our similarities and differences and how we talk about experience and spirituality and justice and injustice if we reframe our movement: Rather than beginning with sexualities and tacking on genders after the fact, would we better include more of us by beginning with another, more broadly shared vulnerable location? What if we begin instead with our overarching and underlying experiences of gender nonconformity?

Would we then finally talk about marriage equality and oppression and God and our goals and mission as a movement in ways that better reflect us all? Would we then find ourselves as kin, whether we are deviating from our assigned gender at birth, or deviating from our assigned gender in sexual partners, or deviating from our assigned gender in roles and mannerisms and interests and clothing, or deviating from our assigned gender by acting as gender traitors who encourage and support deviations from assigned gender?

I wonder whether, starting from a shared identity as gender nonconformists, we would then finally fully begin to understand that we were all assigned gender at birth; that we all have gender identities; that we all have preferred names and pronouns; that there are many expressions of gender and that we really need to talk to and ask everyone how they identify; that straight folks and non-trans folks are also harmed by rigid gender rules and standards of beauty and bathroom policing; that hegemonic masculinity and feminine ideals promote rape culture, disbelief, victim-blaming, and re-victimization; that police brutality and mass incarceration is tied to black bodies being hypermasculinized as super-strong, super-danger, super-predator; and so on.

This is not to argue that the root of all oppression is gender-related or transphobic, or that all of race oppression or sexual oppression can be contained in a single rubric. Still, it is possible that understanding the implications of not conforming to (white) (affluent) gender norms and expectations may go some distance toward improving our understanding of all oppressions as related. Our well-being as a movement is tied inextricably to the well-being of one another, and gender might be a bridge to connect the increasing violences in this decade done both to gay men and to black transgender women. Understanding our shared identities would undoubtedly open our imagining to the vast coalitions we can create in our shared goals of creating change.

The Central Voice has offered free column space to LGBT organizations since its inception in 2003 and to the LGBT Center of Central PA since its founding. CV has been a FAB Media Sponsor, the Center's annual fundraising benefit, since the venue returned in 2007.



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